



Throwing Shade VA



A Guide for Nurseries

The Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) is partnering with Virginia nurseries to offer a discount on the purchase of native species of trees and shrubs. “Throwing Shade VA” is a program to incentivize landowners to buy and plant more native species.

Below are answers to some frequently asked questions for nurseries participating in DOF's native tree and shrub discount program.

What are the benefits of planting native trees?

Native trees and shrubs provide food and habitat for wildlife in Virginia, especially important pollinators. Their benefits to wildlife outweigh those of ornamental species. Native trees evolved in Virginia's different ecosystems, so they are more adapted to their natural environment and more likely to thrive. Success of these native species means that less maintenance and resources will be required to care for them, saving us time and money! Any landscaping needs can be met by planting natives, and there are diverse species to select from to meet your goals.

Once they are established in an appropriate area, most natives are hardy and require little watering or fertilizer, if any. Native trees are not invasive growers as some non-natives can be. They maintain their own space and foster more biodiversity in our communities and forests, all while improving water quality, preventing soil erosion, and storing greenhouse gases effectively.

How much is the tree discount?

A \$25 discount is available on eligible trees and shrubs valued at \$50 or more.

What species and sizes are eligible to receive the discount?

DOF will provide a list of approved native tree and shrub species eligible for the discount, including eligible native cultivars and additional cultivar guidance ([Eligible Native Species](#)). The maximum tree size eligible for this program is 2-inch caliper.

Trees must be purchased from a participating nursery from April 1 to June 1.

How will this program benefit nurseries?

Our hope is that the native tree discount program will allow nurseries to be successful in selling more native trees to landowners and incentivize customers to purchase these native species from partnering nurseries. Nurseries will be reimbursed for the tree discounts as well as time spent executing the program. See *“How will the nursery be reimbursed and how often?”* for more details regarding reimbursement.

Will nurseries need to sign an agreement?

Yes. DOF will distribute a Request for Application (RFA) to which retail nurseries must respond to be eligible to participate in the program. In the supporting documents of the RFA, DOF outlines the scope of the program and requirements of nurseries to achieve successful participation and reimbursement. Nurseries will need to be registered in the state's eVA procurement system to participate.

How will we keep track of where trees get planted? How do we record the information?

DOF has developed a simple survey that customers will use to record necessary information and receive the discount. At the time of purchasing their native tree or shrub, customers will use their smartphone to scan the QR code on the tree tag. The QR code will take them to the survey page where they will record the number of native trees purchased, the location where their tree(s) will be planted, and the nursery they are purchasing from. DOF will provide [paper forms](#) as well so that those without a smartphone can write down the required information. Nurseries are responsible for entering the information from paper surveys into the electronic survey link, or if preferred, they may scan paper surveys and send them to the DOF contact via email. This step must be completed before invoices can be paid. Customers will need to complete this step and show the survey confirmation page to the cashier to receive their discount.

Why the QR code?

By scanning the tree tag QR code at the time of purchase, customers enter basic information that helps DOF track the Commonwealth's water quality improvement goals. This also provides vital information to inform agency decisions on allocating funding for planting projects. This information is confidential and will not be shared.

Who will create the tree tags and other informational materials?

DOF will provide tree tags, which contain the QR code for reporting. DOF will also provide nurseries with [paper forms](#) for tree reporting without a smartphone, as well as program outreach materials and a banner for the nursery to display.

How will the nursery be reimbursed and how often?

Nurseries will be reimbursed through the Commonwealth's eVA procurement system. Participating nurseries will need to register for an account in this system prior to the start of the program. Nurseries will email invoices to the DOF contact for reimbursement of discounts, and they will be paid an additional \$2 of each discounted native tree or shrub sold to account for administrative time – which equals 8% of the \$25 discount. The payment type (e.g., check, ACH, etc.) as specified in the vendor setup process will be utilized. The maximum reimbursement to each nursery is not to exceed \$30,000 per program year (April 1 – June 1). Nurseries may invoice monthly during the program year, or they may submit one invoice at the end of the program year. All invoices must be received by June 30.

What does an invoice need?

Invoices must contain species type, number of trees sold, reimbursement of discount for each tree, and official business name of the nursery. The number of trees and shrubs invoiced should reflect the numbers reported through the QR code survey. See example below of sample invoice:

Nursery Name/Logo

Date Sold	Tree Species	Nursery Original Price*	\$25 Discount Price	Discount Reimbursement to Nursery	\$2 Admin Fee Per Tree	Total Payment to Nursery
4/1/2023	Flowering Dogwood	\$140	\$115	\$25	\$2.00	\$27.00
4/1/2023	River Birch	\$100	\$75	\$25	\$2.00	\$27.00
4/2/2023	White Oak	\$120	\$95	\$25	\$2.00	\$27.00
4/3/2023	Eastern Red Cedar	\$110	\$85	\$25	\$2.00	\$27.00
Payment Total						\$108.00

**Costs and numbers are approximate.*

DOF Contact

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